

## PART I. BACKGROUND AND PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### BACKGROUND

Chapter 901, Statutes of 1992 (Senate Bill 1114, Leonard) established the California Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Act, an academic mentoring program with the statutory goal of matching every student who needs one with an academic mentor.

The 1996-97 Budget Act included \$5 million, the first appropriation in support of the Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program (AVMSP). An additional \$5 million was appropriated to expand the Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program during the 1998-99 fiscal year. **The 2001-02 Budget Act provides \$10 million in Proposition 98 funding for the support of the AVMSP, of which \$500,000 is prioritized to target foster care youth. This Request for Applications (RFA) will fund academic mentoring programs whose primary clientele are foster care youth.**

**The Office of the Secretary for Education understands that many children in the foster care system are placed in temporary homes and/or school sites for unspecified periods of time within one school year. Those proposals that demonstrate a strong commitment and sensitivity to providing continuity of services to these mobile populations will be looked upon favorably.**

The California Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Act includes these legislative declarations:

- Every California child is encouraged to have a caring adult who, along with parents and teachers, is able to offer support, friendship, encouragement, and motivation to help the child excel academically and lead a productive life.
- As a society, we look to a child's family to provide a supportive home environment and realize that the primary responsibility for childrearing must remain with the family. However, we are keenly aware of increases in child abuse and neglect, the escalation of drug and alcohol abuse, and that many children who could excel in school are not receiving all the help and support they need to succeed.
- Untapped human resources exist in local communities throughout the state that can provide many children with an additional caring person, in support of the family and the school system, to volunteer as a positive academic role model or mentor. These individuals will help those children progress in school and help direct and reinforce the many opportunities that will further enhance each child's life.

- The private sector throughout California should be commended for its generous financial support of public schools. Now there is another significant contribution they can and must make to California's children and youth - the investment of human capital in our children's future as academic volunteers and mentors.
- Programs such as 100 Black Men, which provides encouragement and support to children through the use of mentors, have resulted in significant increases in graduation rates at the secondary level and in much improved enrollment rates in post secondary education for some of our most vulnerable youth.
- Local, regional, and statewide resource referral systems must be established to efficiently link children to potential academic volunteers and mentors within existing programs and organizations.
- Volunteer and mentor service must be encouraged and appropriately recognized.

## **ACADEMIC MENTORING**

An academic mentor is defined by statute as an unpaid volunteer who "supports the needs of the individual child with whom the volunteer is matched, including, but not limited to, strengthening the child's academic preparation and achievement."

A national mentoring workgroup defined mentoring as a "structured relationship between two people in which one helps the other to develop and learn."

Mentoring has proven to be an effective strategy for schools in helping students learn the value of education, improve academic performance, and develop job-related and life management skills.

## **PROGRAM GOAL**

The Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program has the statutory goal of providing every student who needs one with an academic mentor. The program seeks to foster student-mentor relationships that address individual student needs and circumstances to improve each student's overall school performance and academic achievement. For the sole purpose of this RFA, foster care youth are the primary target clientele.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

The Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program is a school grant program. Grants are intended to provide funds as an incentive to school districts and county offices of education to develop or improve upon existing academic mentoring programs

on behalf of a school or group of schools. The Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program encourages grantees to form lasting partnerships and collaboratives with both public and private groups such as private industry, higher education and community based organizations that will sustain the practice of mentoring in the school community as an effective means for improving individual student performance and achievement beyond the grant period.

The Academic Volunteer and Mentor Service Program is administered by the Governor's Office of the Secretary for Education. The Governor's Office is charged with selecting grantees and distributing the funds appropriated for the purposes of this program through a competitive application process. For the sole purpose of this application, foster care youth are the primary target clientele. Upon selection of grantees, the Governor's Office of the Secretary for Education will be responsible for providing technical assistance to local school-based mentoring programs and monitoring grant compliance.